

Media, PA — This afternoon, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) spoke to the press about a new commitment from House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-MN) to assure that the findings of the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) investigation of the NY/NJ/Philadelphia Metropolitan area FAA Airspace Redesign will be reviewed prior to the redesign of the NY/NJ/Philadelphia metropolitan area airspace. —  
“Yesterday was an important day for Delaware County,” said Congressman Sestak, “Chairman Oberstar’s assurance on the House floor provided much needed clarification on whether the FAA Airspace Redesign will be implemented prior to the completion of GAO investigation on the cost effectiveness and operational efficiencies of the FAA Airspace Redesign. It also indicates how seriously the Committee is taking the outcome of this study by the government’s leading watchdog, which will provide an independent and true cost-benefit analysis of this fatally flawed project. We have assurance from the Chairman that the FAA plan will not take effect before the GAO report is done.”

During the press call, Representative Robert Andrews (D-NJ) joined Congressman Sestak and congratulated him for his efforts in working with Chairman Oberstar.

“What Congressman Sestak was able to do was to negotiate and win from Chairman Oberstar his commitment to do whatever it took to make sure that the FAA will not begin the implementation of the FAA Airspace Redesign before it is presented to Congressional Committees,” said Congressman Andrews.

Specifically, in the Congressional Record on Thursday, Chairman Oberstar stated: “You have my assurance that I will talk to the FAA, will talk to GAO, ask them to accelerate the work on their report, and GAO’s findings need to be reviewed prior to the redesign of the airspace.”

On the House floor yesterday, Congressman Sestak also spoke about the harmful impact of the FAA Airspace Redesign to dense residential communities.

“For the past 10 years, the FAA has been working on the New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia Metropolitan Area Airspace Redesign project. It has become increasingly clear to me that the process by which it was conducted is deeply flawed. I am gravely concerned that the FAA has failed to conduct an accurate cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the full cost of this project, including social costs such as the impact of noise on educational development, health, safety, and property values, to dense residential communities, including many in Delaware County in my Congressional District,” said Joe, “As the 2005 DOT Inspector General report and as former FAA Administrator Marion Blakely indicated to me, the cost effectiveness and operational efficiency gained by the Airspace Redesign is still largely unknown, and “the juice

may not be worth the squeeze.”

Back in May, Congressman Sestak, Congressman Rob Andrews (D-NJ), and the Transportation and Infrastructure Aviation Subcommittee requested that the GAO investigate the process and erroneously determined costs, operational efficiencies, and environmental impacts of the FAA's proposed airspace covering the New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia region.

“The FAA’s methodology and models used in this project are misguided and flawed,” said Congressman Sestak, “The project will create adverse impacts to affected communities without a full accounting of costs and benefits, and this is not acceptable. The FAA has not been responsive in taking into account the input of both the public and experts who have detailed their concerns with the process.”

Congressman Sestak’s review of the FAA’s Record of Decision and the FAA’s final Environmental Impact Statement of the FAA’s Airspace Redesign, and found that little in the EIS document had changed despite the thousands of comments and dozens of public meetings, held in my District and other affected communities. In May, over 2,000 people the FAA public meeting in Delaware County.

“I have worked aggressively with leaders in Congress, as well as with those at the state and local level, to address the concerns my constituents have over the noise and environmental impact of this redesign,” stated Congressman Sestak. “I’ve said all along that the FAA’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement is based on flawed models and assumptions. The study conducted by GAO will give us an independent basis for stopping the FAA Airspace Redesign Project in its entirety. This GAO report will serve as an accountability study of whether a true cost-benefit analysis was done, and will serve to halt this project until a proper analysis is done, forcing the FAA to look at other options because Congress is now provided with an objective government study outlining why this process is flawed, forcing it to be ended.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on

Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.